

Audience's perceptions and attitudes toward the use of colloquial Belgian Dutch in Flemish subtitling: further evidence for the gradual acceptance of *tussentaal* Dutch

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The present study investigates the vitality of colloquial Belgian Dutch by examining to what extent it is used in the intralingual subtitles of the Flemish public broadcaster VRT and how television viewers perceive the use of this *tussentaal* in subtitling. Previous research has demonstrated that *tussentaal* frequently occurs in spoken language on Flemish television (e.g. Van Hoof, 2013). Therefore, it is particularly interesting to investigate whether *tussentaal* penetrates in intralingual subtitles and, if that is the case, whether the audience sympathizes with this. Such a shift from an exclusively spoken variety to a written medium would be indicative for the further spreading and acceptance of *tussentaal* in Flanders.

In a first step, we examine (i) to what extent Flemish subtitlers prefer colloquial Belgian Dutch rather than General Standard Dutch, (ii) whether they more often use lexical colloquialisms than morphological and grammatical colloquialisms, and (iii) whether the program genre affects these linguistic choices. To achieve this goal, we analyze the language use in the original speech and the corresponding subtitles of forty television programs that were broadcast by VRT between 2014 and 2016. The results reveal that colloquial Belgian Dutch does not merely occur in spoken registers, but that it also appears in the written subtitles of the public broadcaster, especially in entertainment programs (e.g. fiction and comedy).

In a next step, we investigate the perceptions and attitudes of the Flemish television audience toward the use of *tussentaal* in intralingual subtitling. To achieve this goal, 24 informants are shown two cooking shows, of which one fragment contains intralingual subtitles in Standard Dutch and the other in *tussentaal*. Afterwards, the participants are interviewed to verify (i) whether the use of *tussentaal* in the subtitles draws their attention (perception) and (ii) whether they prefer or reject *tussentaal* in television subtitling (attitude). The results reveal that Standard Dutch is still believed to be the best language for written discourse, even though *tussentaal* is proved to be a vital alternative in television subtitling.

References

Van Hoof, S. (2013). Feiten en fictie. Taalvariatie in Vlaamse televisiereeksen vroeger en nu. *Nederlandse Taalkunde*, 18(1), 35-64.